

In the Claims:

Please SUBSTITUTE the following amended claims for the pending claims with the same number (a marked up copy of the prior pending claim with all changes shown is supplied in appendix 1):

1. (Once Amended) A plasma confining assembly for minimizing unwanted plasma formations in regions outside of a process region in a process chamber, comprising:
a first confining element positioned proximate the periphery of the process region, and including an exposed conductive surface that is electrically grounded; and
a second confining element positioned proximate the periphery of the process region, and including an exposed insulating surface, which is configured to at least partially cover a non-exposed conductive core that is electrically grounded, the second confining element being spaced apart from the first confining element such that one of the confining elements is disposed in an upper portion of the process chamber and the other confining element is disposed in a lower portion of the process chamber,
wherein the first confining element and the second confining element substantially reduces the effects of plasma forming components that pass therebetween.

15. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 further including a pressure control ring formed from a dielectric medium and disposed between the first and second rings, the pressure control ring being configured for physically confining a plasma within the process region, while permitting the passage of process gases to pass therethrough.

16. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the exposed insulating surface is configured to be level with a top surface of the second electrode.

17. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the first ring is configured to be disposed between the first electrode and a chamber wall of the process chamber, and wherein the second ring is configured to be disposed between the second electrode and the chamber wall of the process chamber.

18. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the first ring includes an inner ring and an outer ring, wherein the inner ring is formed from a dielectric medium and is configured to be disposed between the first electrode and the outer ring, and wherein the outer ring includes the conductive member of the first ring.

19. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the second ring includes an inner ring and an outer ring, wherein the inner ring is formed from a dielectric medium and is configured to be disposed between the second electrode and the outer ring, and wherein the outer ring includes the conductive portion and the insulating portion.

20. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the conductive element is a portion of the process chamber.

21. (Once Amended) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 25 wherein the first ring and the second ring are configured to extend in a radial direction relative to an axis of the process chamber, and wherein an outer edge of the first ring extends further than an outer edge of the second ring.

Please CANCEL claim 11.

Please ADD the following claims:

22. (New) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 17 wherein the first ring is spaced apart laterally from the chamber wall thus leaving an open area between the first ring and the chamber wall.

23. (New) A plasma confining assembly for minimizing unwanted plasma formations in regions outside of a process region in a process chamber, comprising:

a first confining element positioned at a boundary between the process region where a plasma is ignited and sustained for processing a work piece and the regions outside of the process region where the plasma is not desired, the first confining element including a

conductive member that is exposed within the process chamber, the conductive member being electrically grounded; and

a second confining element positioned at the boundary between the process region where the plasma is ignited and sustained for processing and the regions outside of the process region where the plasma is not desired, the second confining element including an insulating portion that is exposed within the process chamber, and a conductive portion that is covered by the insulating portion so as to keep the conductive portion from being exposed inside the process chamber, the conductive member being electrically grounded,

the second confining element being spaced apart from the first confining element so as to form an open area therebetween that permits by-product gases to pass therethrough from the process region to the regions outside of the process region while substantially preventing charged particles or electric fields from passing therethrough from the process region to the regions outside of the process region.

24. (New) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 23 wherein the first and second confining elements are configured to be located between the process region and an exhaust port.

25. (New) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 23 wherein the first confining element is formed as a first ring configured to surround a first electrode, and wherein the second confining element is formed as a second ring configured to surround a second electrode that is spaced apart and parallel to the first electrode, the first and second electrodes defining the process region therebetween, the first and second electrodes being configured for generating an electric field that is sufficiently strong to both ignite and sustain the plasma in the process region of the process chamber.

26. (New) The plasma confining assembly as recited in claim 23 wherein the exposed conductive member of the first confining element and the exposed insulating portion of the second confining element each include surfaces that are substantially parallel to one another and that are perpendicular to the boundary between the process region where a plasma is ignited and sustained for processing a work piece and the regions outside of the process region where the plasma is not desired.